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PRESS RELEASE

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Nelchina Caribou Hunting Season Dates Extended

(Glennallen) – Caribou hunters in Game Management Unit 13 will have an additional 10 days of hunting this September. In an effort to increase harvest on the Nelchina caribou herd the Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued an emergency order extending all state caribou hunts in Unit 13 (YC495, RC561, RC562, CC001, and DC485) from September 21st through September 30th at 11:59 pm. The bag limit remains one caribou for all Unit 13 state-managed caribou hunts.

The department's July 2019 post-calving survey estimated the Nelchina herd at approximately 53,500 caribou – well above the upper limit of the population objective of 35,000–40,000 caribou. Caribou population objectives are based on the number of animals a given range can sustainably support. Too many caribou can over-graze a herd's range leading to malnutrition or starvation. Sometimes caribou will leave an over-grazed range or join up with adjacent herds for areas of better forage.

Information collected from the 2019 survey shows high calf productivity and survival with 17,650 calves and 35,850 adults on the landscape. This is a departure from last year, when calf recruitment through the winter was low and July aerial surveys revealed fewer than average new calves for the year.

Hunters are reminded that if you have already filled your registration, draw, or federal subsistence permit this season no additional state opportunity remains. Hunters who have reported unsuccessful hunts or "did not hunt" are encouraged to have their permit reissued. The department also anticipates the winter season to remain open for all hunts although there is no assurance of a significant number of caribou being available in Unit 13 over the winter.

Successful hunters can provide wildlife managers the information they need to closely track in-season harvest by filing hunt reports online at hunt.alaska.gov, by phone at (907) 822-3461 (24/7), or in person at the Glennallen or Palmer Fish and Game offices. Hunters are reminded that hunts may still be closed by emergency order should harvest be excessive, but this is not anticipated at this time.

For hunt updates and additional information call the Nelchina Hotline at 907-267-2304, or contact Heidi Hatcher at heidi.hatcher@alaska.gov or (907) 822-3461.

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